



April 30, 2007

Rural Health Care Pilot Program
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

To Program Review Committee:

Please accept this support letter for Onecommunity and Northeastern Ohio Regional Health Information Organization (NEO RHIO) in their proposal to create *HealthNet* - a Northeast Ohio Broadband Initiative for Tele-communications and Health Information Exchange.

Children's Hospital Medical Center of Akron (dba Akron Children's Hospital) is a full-service pediatric medical center that serves a population base of 4.7 million in more than 25 counties of northeast Ohio. Founded in 1890 as a two-room day nursery, Children's has developed into a leading center for the medical care of children from birth through adolescence.

Akron Children's Hospital is a teaching and research hospital affiliated with the Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine (NEOUCOM), a community-based medical school which operates as a medical consortium with 18 community hospitals and three publicly funded universities (Kent State University, University of Akron, and Youngstown State University). The hospital's medical staff includes 250 primary care physicians and 385 specialists with hospital privileges. Another 510 physicians in the region are affiliated with Children's. Furthermore, Akron Children's Hospital manages a network of 14 pediatric practices throughout the service region, six in rural areas; is a pediatric referral center for more than 32 urban and rural medical centers; and is a regional burn treatment center for adults and children.

Implementation of the proposed *HealthNet* by Onecommunity will, for example, facilitate future growth for tele-medicine, coordination of disaster preparedness activities, and regional planning in the event of an impending medical emergency such as an avian influenza pandemic. We believe Onecommunity is in a strong position to implement the proposed project because they have demonstrated experience in working with healthcare organizations to extend our current network, and have clearly detailed how they would install additional gigabyte optical fiber connections to hospitals, medical providers, and government health agencies in the rural areas of northeastern Ohio.

We believe that OneCommunity's goals are specific and meet the tone and objectives of the FCC Pilot Program. Specific aims of the OneCommunity's proposal include: (1) connecting rural hospitals located in the Northeast Ohio rural health region over a dedicated broadband network; (2) extending the OneCommunity/NEO RHIO broadband services to rural providers; (3) creating a regional repository that employs secure telehealth applications for chronic disease monitoring


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and continuing education services; and (4) implementing sustainable enterprise solutions using Health Information Technology for eligible providers in rural and underserved counties. Moreover, this network is expected to improve the quality of health care while reducing the cost.

Lastly, Akron Children's Hospital supports OneCommunity because of their proven history and continued sustainability. OneCommunity has made significant progress in identifying innovative applications and services that take advantage of the physical fiber network that they have built and continue to build. They have successfully developed a network of not-for-profit and for profit organizational applications that work collectively to realize the potential these resources have to offer to the region and the health care of its citizens. Their use cases are clearly defined and address the needs of our urban/rural region.

Again, as a member of the OneCommunity northeast Ohio network, we express our support of the proposal to create *HealthNet*, a northeast Ohio rural pilot program initiative to expand access to advanced tele-communications, greater more cost-effective use of information technology, and the secure exchange of health information.

Sincerely,



Mark Watson
Chief Operating Officer